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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Wednesday, June 3, 1931

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "Meals for the Teen Age." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

Bulletin available: "Planning Meals for the Junior Homemaker."

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"There's just no let-up on this problem of feeding the family," exclaimed a friend of mine the other day. "A mother no sooner masters the secret of correct baby feeding than the baby gets ahead of her and reaches the toddler or runabout stage, and it is up to Mother to learn how to feed her preschool child. Then along comes the school age and a whole new job of planning meals. And just as family meals begin to settle down to routine, the children step into high school and adolescence begins.

"I do think, Aunt Sammy, that the teen age is the most difficult of all to feed. My Jack, who is fifteen, is continually hungry. He has a perfectly insatiable appetite, and in spite of the enormous meals I prepare for him, he never gets filled up. The whole cookie jar can be emptied in about two minutes and he will still be hungry. Ann, who is a year younger, has suddenly become fussy and finicky about meals. She has lost her appetite for good plain food, and wants to exist on sweets or fancy foods. She is full of whims about eating and refuses to eat breakfast anymore."

My friend is quite right. A mother's job is never done. She has to be on her toes continually, ready to meet the unexpected problem that may come up at any minute. Life is a series of surprises for mothers, and their adolescent children often prove the biggest surprises of all.

Adolescence, you know, is the second period of very rapid growth. The first is infancy. Boys in their teens suddenly shoot up taller than their fathers. In stature they seem to be men. But mentally and emotionally they are just growing up and struggling to adjust themselves to all the strangeness of their new bodies. With girls it is much the same.

As a result, the period is often one of stress and strain for both parents and children. Parents don't understand how these children, whom they thought they knew so well, can be such strange and different creatures. And children frequently feel misunderstood, irritated and unhappy with their parents.

In this as in the first period of rapid growth, food is particularly important. I should have said "correct food." Food that doesn't just fill up the child but supplies him with the necessary building materials. Boys have the task of covering their long body frames with muscle. Girls grow less fast, but must meet the demands for more blood, muscle and fat.

Inadequate or wrong food at this time hinders normal development just as truly as in infancy. Many a healthy child, whose mother has taken infinite care to give him just the right amount of milk, codliver oil, orange juice, and so on in infancy, fails to make the strong man or woman which he gave promise of. Why? Because of lack of nourishment during the teen age. Mothers who have seen their sons eat so heartily at this period are slow to under stand how these same boys can be undernourished. They forget that quality as well as quantity are needed for building.

One frequent cause of trouble is that parents feel that the high school boy or girl is so well-grown that the time is past when it is necessary to bother over food. The growing boy is allowed to fill himself up with too many sweets, too many fats, and too much every thing. And he may reap the wild oats of his eating in middle life. The gout, indigestion, diabetes and kidney disorders of late middle life, so prevalent in men, may sometimes be traced to the mistakes of early food habits.

So the wise mother sees to it that her growing children have meals containing such foods as milk, eggs, green vegetables, fruits and cereals prepared in somewhat concentrated form. Everything served on the table is inviting to the eye. For breakfast, high school children need fruit, milk or cocoa, cereals and eggs or bacon. Adding chopped dates or nuts to the cereal makes it more attractive and also adds food value. If the daughter of the family does not care for cooked cereal, prepared cereal with fruit of whole wheat toast and milk may be served instead.

Fortunately fruit is usually well liked, and while it may seem an expensive item, it is important for body building. So are green vegetables. Since girls, who especially need a rich supply of iron and vitamin A, are usually fond of salads, here is a splendid way to work in the raw vegetables. Boys should also be taught the value of lettuce, celery, cabbage and so on as sources of minerals and vitamins.

Meat may be served in moderate amounts. To add to the protein supply, use cheese, eggs and milk dishes.

Cereal foods will help keep up the fuel value of the meals and are inexpensive. Warm or new bread should be used sparingly, but day-old bread made with different flours and perhaps with dried fruits and nuts is to be recommended. So are the cereal and milk desserts, such as cornstarch, bread and rice puddings and custards.

Yes, Geraldine, the sermon is over now and the floor is open for questions. What was that? Geraldine is asking for a good dinner menu planned for the teen age.

I'll let the Menu Specialist reply. She has a fine dinner all planned to suit both Hungry Jacks and finiky Anns.

The main dish is beef and ham gumbo in a rice ring. I'll give you the recipe for that dish as soon as I have told you what else is in this meal.

All right: Beef and Ham Gumbo; Swiss Chard or other greens; - for iron and vitamins, you know; Cornbread Sticks; Milk; Fresh Pineapple and Strawberries; and Crisp Cookies. Just take a special note of this menu please. It contains good substantial filling dishes to stick to the ribs. You'll believe that when you have eaten some of the beef and ham gumbo. Also the dinner contains vitamins, minerals, color, and variety of flavor and texture. The heavy food, you see, is balanced by that is light, crisp and tasty.

Gumbo is an old Creole name for a soup or main dish containing okra. Chicken gumbo is one of the most famous of old Southern dishes, and ham gumbo follows a close second, I'm told by my Southern friends. I won't guarantee all this information. I'm not from the South, so I have to trust to what I'm told by people who were brought up below the Mason-Dixon line.

Beef and Ham Gumbo is served in a rice ring. First I'll give you the recipe for the gumbo and then I'll tell you how to prepare the ring.

Eleven ingredients for Beef and Ham Gumbo:

3/4 pound of cured ham, diced
1 pound of beef, diced
2 tablespoons of chopped parsley
1 onion, sliced
1 green pepper, chopped fine
1/2 cup of chopped parsley
1 pint of water
1 quart of tomatoes, fresh or canned
1 quart of okra, cut crosswise
Bay leaf or celery seed, if desired, and
Salt and pepper to taste.

I'll read that list once more (Repeat)

Cook the ham and beef until browned in a large, heavy skillet. Add the parsley, the onion, the green pepper and the celery. Cook for a few minutes. Now add the water and the tomatoes. Cover and simmer until the meat is almost tender. Then add the okra. Season to taste and simmer uncovered until the okra is tender and the stew has thickened. Then serve the gumbo in the rice ring.

For the rice ring you need just five ingredients. They are:

1 cup of rice
4 cups of water
1 teaspoon of salt
2 tablespoons of butter or other fat, and
2 dashes of tabasco sauce.

I'll give that list again. (Repeat).

Wash the rice well, and sprinkle it into the rapidly boiling salted water. Cook for about 20 minutes, or until the rice is tender and the water absorbed. Add the seasonings. Put the rice into a well-greased ring mold, and pat it down. Reheat it in the oven. Then turn it onto a round platter, fill the center with the gumbo, and serve it at once.

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Tomorrow: "Mildew Stains."